

Standard USHC-6: The student will demonstrate an understanding of foreign developments that contributed to the United States' emergence as a world power in the twentieth century.

USHC-6.4 Outline the causes and course of World War I, focusing on the involvement of the United States, including the effects of nationalism, ethnic and ideological conflicts, and Woodrow Wilson's leadership in the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: 2B Understand/ Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 5th grade, students summarized actions by the United States that contributed to the rise of this nation as a world power, including ...the role played by the United States in World War I (5-3.6).

In 7th grade, students explained the causes and key events of World War I, including the rise of nationalism, ethnic and ideological conflicts in different regions, political and economic rivalries, the human costs of the mechanization of war, the Russian Revolution, and the entry of the United States into the War (7-5.1). They also explained the outcome and effects of World War I, including the conditions and failures of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles and the effects of major treaties on population movement, the international economy, and shifts in borders (7-5.2).

In Global Studies, students again summarized the causes of World War I, including political and economic rivalries, ethnic and ideological conflicts, and nationalism and propaganda (GS-5.1). They summarized the worldwide changes that took place following World War I, including the significance of the Russian Revolution; the rise of nationalist movements in India, Africa, and Southeast Asia; the revolutions and political change in China; and the creation of new states in Europe (GS-5.2).

It is essential for the students to know:

Students need to understand the **causes and course of World War I**. The M.A.I.N. causes of World War I were Militarism, secret Alliances, Imperialism and Nationalism. The driving force was nationalism. 'Nation' refers to a group of people who share a common language, religion, history and traditions. Not all nations had states; many were included in empires. **Ethnic and ideological differences** led to conflict within these empires. **Nationalism** also spurred competition among states in military strength and led European nations to establish a complex system of military alliances. Russia, France and England formed an alliance and Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary formed a competing alliance. The newly united countries of Germany and Italy were anxious to establish colonies to gain wealth and international influence and competed with other nations to do so. The igniting incident of the Great War was the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Bosnia by a Serbian nationalist. The resulting confrontation between Austria-Hungary and Serbia quickly involved much of Europe in conflict due to the alliance system.

The United States declared neutrality at the outbreak of the war, however various factors challenged American neutrality and eventually led to the **involvement of the United States** in the Great War. The traditional trading partnership with Great Britain and the blockade of German ports by the British navy severely limited American trade with Germany. American businesses made loans to the Allies in order to continue trade. Public opinion was impacted by America's traditional connection to the British. The German use of the submarine affected public opinion against Germany and alienated President Wilson, who was incensed by the loss of innocent lives. The 1915 German U-boat's sinking of the British passenger ship, the *Lusitania*, brought about sharp protests from President Wilson but did **not** bring the

United States into the European war. Instead, Germany pledged to restrict their use of the submarine. Wilson campaigned for re-election in 1916 on the slogan that “he kept us out of war.” The interception and publication by the British of Germany’s Zimmerman note to Mexico negatively impacted American public opinion. In early 1917, revolution in Russia replaced the monarchy with a republic and President Wilson could now consider allying the United States with a ‘democratic’ Russia. The decision of Germany to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in the spring of 1917 and Wilson’s desire to broker a just peace prompted Wilson to ask the Congress to declare war on Germany in April of 1917. President Wilson announced his intention to “make the world safe for democracy” and later issued his Fourteen Points. The American Expeditionary Force affected the **course** of the war by deflecting the last push of the Germans on the western front in France and the armistice of November 11, 1918 ended the fighting between the Allies and the Central Powers.

The mobilization of the home front for the war effort stimulated **ethnic and ideological conflicts** within the United States. Propaganda characterized Germans as “Huns” and resulted in discrimination against Americans of German descent. The passage of the Sedition Act restricted the rights of Americans to voice their ideological objections to the war effort and contributed to the post-war Red Scare.

President Wilson took **a leadership role at the Versailles Conference**. Wilson wanted to create a lasting peace based on the Fourteen Points which he hoped would eliminate many of the causes of the war but did not understand the desires of the European leaders of France, Italy, and Great Britain. The other allies were determined to protect their own national interests. They imposed a war guilt clause and reparations payments on Germany. New national borders drawn at the conference based on self determination of peoples could not accommodate all of the complexity of **ethnic** diversity within Europe. These actions laid the basis for the next war. Wilson was able to include the League of Nations in the Treaty of Versailles, however the United States Senate was hesitant to involve the United States in European affairs on a permanent basis. President Wilson was unwilling to compromise with the Senate and his physical incapacity as a result of a stroke made compromise impossible. The Senate refused to ratify the **Treaty of Versailles** and did not become a member of the League of Nations. The United States later made a separate peace with Germany and sent observers to meetings of the League of Nations.

It is not essential for the students to know:

Students do not need to remember the names of the alliances, the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance. They do not need to know the new weaponry introduced in World War I, except for the submarine. Students do not need to remember that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia led to the separate treaty of Brest-Litovsk or that American troops were landed in Russia to support the Whites in the Russian civil war. They do not need to know how the United States mobilized the home front such as the actions of the War Industries Board or the Food Administration nor do they need to know the role of women in the war effort. The 1918 flu epidemic and its effects do not need to be covered. Students do not need to know the names of the groups who opposed the ratification of the treaty such as the Irreconcilables or the Reservationists. They do not need to know the details of Wilson’s cross country campaign to gain public support for the Versailles Treaty or the multiple mistakes that Wilson made in the negotiation of the treaty or in his attempts to get the Senate to ratify it.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments will require students to **explain** the causes of the United States entrance into World War I and the role of the United States Expeditionary Force in bringing about an end to the fighting. Students should be able to **summarize** the effects of nationalism and ethnic and ideological conflicts on the outbreak of the war, on the American home front and on the making of the Versailles Treaty. They should be able to **explain** Woodrow Wilson’s leadership in the writing of the Treaty of Versailles and the establishment of the League of Nations and the reasons for its rejection by the United States Senate. They should be able to **interpret** maps and political cartoons to **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.